

VZCZCXRO3006
RR RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0133/01 052114Z
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 211142Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1145
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1478
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1334
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1482
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0173
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0743
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1108
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1536
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 3932
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1305
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 1961
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1699

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000133

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZANU-PF WINS BY-ELECTION AMID LOW TURNOUT

REF: REFTEL: HARARE 115

Classified By: Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Eric T. Schultz
under Section 1.5 b/d

Summary

¶1. (SBU) ZANU-PF retained the Chiredzi South parliamentary seat in the by-election held February 17 with 66.7 percent of the vote. The anti-Senate MDC candidate garnered 21.1 percent of the tally, while the pro-Senate flag bearer came in fourth behind the UPP candidate. Voting day was peaceful, but characterized by widespread voter apathy with turnout at 29.4 percent, well below the figure in the March 2005 general election. In addition to voter apathy, ZANU-PF's victory was also due in large part to pre-election intimidation and manipulation of voters (reftel). That said, the MDC split also contributed to voter apathy and made ZANU-PF's victory easier than it could have been. End Summary.

ZANU-PF Retains Rural MP Seat

¶2. (U) In proportions that closely mirrored the March 2005 parliamentary election in Chiredzi South, ZANU-PF candidate Kilian Gwanesta won the poll on February 17 with 10,401 votes out of 15,603 total cast. The anti-Senate MDC candidate garnered 3,300 votes and the UPP candidate won 896. Meanwhile, the pro-Senate MDC candidate came in fourth with only 674 votes.

¶3. (SBU) Local ZESN election observers and poloff, accredited as an observer, noted calm on election day with no reports of violence or outright intimidation. Electoral

officials appeared generally professional. However, voter turnout at 29.4 percent was extremely low, down more than 5,000 voters as compared to the March 2005 parliamentary election. Poloff observed only one polling station in the morning with a line of voters and many polling stations were virtually deserted all day.

Another Victory for Local Observers

14. (U) Local observation group ZESN once again used the election to gain experience and to refine their parallel vote count methodology. ZESN several conducted pre-election visits to the area and on election day fielded 45 accredited observers, giving the far-flung and infrastructure-poor constituency sufficient coverage. Through a mix of mobile and stationary teams, ZESN collected results from a sampling of polling stations that, through statistical extrapolation, closely mirrored and confirmed the official tabulation.

15. (SBU) In addition, ZESN produced a timely and well written report on the by-election. The report noted that that the government and ruling party had heavily tilted the playing field in their favor through pre-election intimidation and manipulation. In particular, ZESN noted reports of the government using food aid to influence voting. ZESN attributed the apathy to a number of factors, including the choice of an ethnic Karanga rather than a local Shangaani to represent ZANU-PF as well as the inability of the two MDC factions to agree on a single opposition candidate.

HARARE 00000133 002 OF 002

Comment

16. (C) The Chiredzi South election demonstrates anew that what is most important in determining electoral outcomes in Zimbabwe is not necessarily cheating on election day but rather ZANU-PF's ability to use government resources to intimidate and manipulate voters in the run-up to the election. This is particularly problematic in by-elections, when the government and ruling party can concentrate government resources on a single parliamentary constituency. That said, the MDC played into the ruling party's hands again in this election, as was the case in the rural council elections last year, by running multiple candidates. ZANU-PF's choice of an ethnic Karanga to run for the seat created an opportunity for the opposition. They failed to take advantage of it.
SCHULTZ